

# IDITAROD NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL



## **Iditarod Historic Trail Managers Seek Memorabilia from America's Attics and Basements**

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Federal land managers for the Iditarod National Historic Trail have announced a campaign to encourage the descendants of Alaska Gold Rush pioneers to share their heritage with the nation.

"During America's last Gold Rush a century ago, thousands of Americans came north seeking wealth and adventure," said Kevin Keeler, Bureau of Land Management coordinator for the Iditarod National Historic Trail. "Many passed over the Seward-to-Nome Mail Trail, now known as the Iditarod, and returned home with memorabilia like postcards, journals, photos and other relics of the day. Over the years these relics have passed from generation to generation, some cherished and protected, others forgotten and left to the elements in basements, attics, and garages across the nation."

Jaime Schmidt is Forest Service manager of a project to rebuild and restore nearly 200 miles of the historic Iditarod Trail from Seward to Girdwood, Alaska. "As efforts continue to rebuild the historic Iditarod Trail and celebrate the upcoming centennial in 2008, we hope to highlight old stories and relics that have not seen the light of day for years," said Schmidt.

"If you are interested in sharing your bit of Iditarod Trail history, we are looking for stories and memorabilia to use in educational signs, brochures, and trail guides. Also, if you would like to share your artifacts with the public and protect them for the future, we can help find a permanent home for your items in one of the public museums along the Iditarod historic trail system."

The Iditarod National Historic Trail commemorates a 2,200-mile system of winter trails that originally connected prehistoric Alaska Native villages, later became a major route for the settlement of Gold Rush-era Alaska, and now plays a vital role in modern-day Alaska. The main trail from Seward to Nome was first mapped and marked in 1908 by the U.S. Army and followed popular Alaska Native trails used since ancient times. In 1910 the main route was diverted to include the booming new Gold Rush communities of Iditarod, Flat, and Discovery. Downturns in mining and the introduction of the airplane for mail and freight service caused a decline in trail use in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1978 the winter trail system was designated as a National Historic Trail by Congress after a sustained effort by Alaskan dog-sledding enthusiasts such as Joe Redington, Sr. Today the historic Iditarod trail system is home to three internationally famous long-distance winter races and is used annually by thousands of winter travelers and recreationists.

For more information or if you would like to contribute your piece of Iditarod history, contact Annette Heckart, Chugach National Forest, 3301 'C' St., Anchorage, Ste. 300, Anchorage, AK 99503, or at (907)743-9502 ([aheckart@fs.fed.us](mailto:aheckart@fs.fed.us)). For more information on the Iditarod National Historic Trail, see <http://www.iditarod.ak.blm.gov>.

